

## ATAP newsletter with link to report Message from President Chuck Tobin

December 3, 2014

# Workplace Violence Prevention Survey Findings

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## INTRODUCTION

Earlier this year, ATAP formed a new working group focusing on Corporate Workplace Violence Prevention Programs. The working group included members from corporate security departments and researchers from an academic institution.

The mission for this working group was to research and baseline best practices relating to workplace violence prevention (WVP) programs.

The group's objectives were to:

- Develop a survey to:
  - Describe corporate American companies' workplace violence prevention programs and policies.
  - Understand the elements of workplace violence prevention and response practices currently in use in companies throughout the US.
- Distribute the survey to members of the ATAP corporate community.

In June 2014, an online survey was emailed to key stakeholders in corporations who have the overall responsibility for their workplace violence prevention program. These individuals were identified from ATAP membership and attendance records from the 2013 ATAP conference. Each corporation had 30 days to complete the survey, and only one individual per company was permitted to complete it.

This document presents the results from the survey and a discussion of the working group's future objectives and next steps.

While the results from this initial survey reflect input from the ATAP corporate community only, our future objectives include distributing the survey to a broader base of corporations.

## METHODS

The online survey addressed components of a comprehensive workplace violence prevention (WVP) program determined by subject matter experts and their company's existing program. These experts also used elements from the document, *Workplace Violence Prevention and Intervention: American National Standard* developed by the American Society for Industrial Security / Society for Human Resources Management (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). Prior to full-scale administration, the survey was pre-tested with security

professionals from a range of industries to obtain feedback about length, comprehensiveness and understandability.

The final survey was emailed to 187 key stakeholders in corporations in June 2014. Of the 187 individuals, three could not be reached (i.e., out of office replies were received), and five indicated they were not responsible for their company's WVP program. A total of 77 individuals completed the survey for a participation response of 43%.

All survey data were anonymous. All individuals' names and company identification were deleted after the survey closed. The survey was administered by the University of Iowa (UI) Injury Prevention Research Center, and the study was approved by the UI Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

### Respondent / Company Characteristics

Most respondents represented companies in the manufacturing (21%), finance and insurance (14%), information technology (12%), retail (9%) and media/communications (9%) industries. The mean number of employees (management, non-management, contractors) covered by their company's WVP program was 51,978, with a range from 50 to 400,000 employees. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents indicated that their companies had international locations. Most respondents were members of ATAP (95%), and 75% were members of the American Society for Industrial Security (Table 1); 71% were members of both.

Table 1: Respondent membership affiliations.

Organization	Percentage of Respondents
Association of Threat Assessment Professionals	94.8
American Society of Industrial Security	75.3
International Security Management Association	15.6
Society for Human Resource Management	9.1

## RESULTS

### Workplace Violence Policies

Approximately 90% of the respondents reported that their company had an approved and released workplace violence policy, 10% reported having a draft and unreleased policy, and 3% reported not having a policy. All companies had the following policies covering the expectations of appropriate behavior: unacceptable behavior, anti-harassment and discrimination, and code of business conduct/ethics. Most had policies on reporting circumstances that raise concerns for safety (97%), substance abuse (96%) and weapons on-site (95%). Eighty percent had policies allowing employer inspections of employee work spaces and/or electronic devices.

### Program Development / Maintenance Resources.

Respondents were also asked about resources they used to develop and/or update their company's WVP program, policies and procedures for threatening behavior, threats and acts of violence. More than 70% of the respondents reported using the ASIS/SHRM Workplace Violence Standard, 63% reported using ATAP resources and presentation materials, and 50% reported using the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Section 5 General Duty Clause for guidance (Table 2).

Table 2. Resources used to develop/update WVP program.

Resource	Percentage of Companies
ASIS/SHRM: Workplace Violence Prevention and Intervention: American National Standard	70.8
ATAP: Workplace Violence Prevention team resources / presentation material	62.5
OSHA Section 5	50.0
Department of Homeland Security	40.3
Federal Bureau of Investigation	37.5

External Consulting Resources. More than 90% of the companies used external resources, in addition to their own workplace violence prevention teams, to manage threatening behavior, threats and acts of violence. Among these companies, 77% hired a consulting psychologist or psychiatrist, 43% hired a threat assessment consultant, and 21% hired a behavioral science consultant. Less than 20% of the companies hired domestic violence (16%), stalking (13%) or suicide prevention (12%) subject matter experts. Smaller companies (less than 5,000 employees) used fewer external resources than larger companies.

Program Evaluation. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents reported that their companies evaluated the effectiveness of their WVP programs. Specifically, 76% analyzed workplace violence trends, and just over half reviewed investigative reports (56%) or evaluated work practice changes (56%). Only 14% used worker surveys to obtain feedback on their WVP program. Smaller companies (less than 5,000 employees) reported evaluating their programs less than larger companies.

## Workplace Violence Prevention Teams

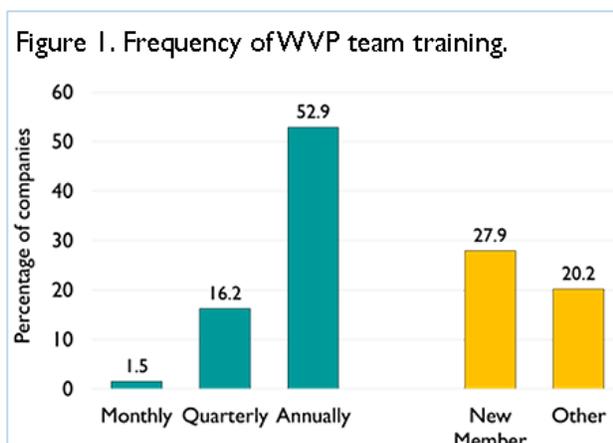
Composition. Most WVP teams had representation from Security (97%), Legal / Compliance (93%) and Human Resources (92%), with much smaller representation from an External Consultant (35%), Employee Assistance Programs (25%) and Medical / Health Services (20%) (Table 3).

Training. Approximately two-thirds of the respondents reported that their WVP teams received training at ATAP conferences (69%) and from external subject matter experts (65%), 59% reported training from workplace violence prevention seminars, and 49% from specialized / focused training opportunities (e.g., company internal workplace violence prevention training).

More than half of the companies trained their teams on topics recommended in industry (ASIS/SHRM, 2011). Approximately 75% of the teams received training in behavioral or psychological aspects of workplace violence, incident resolution and violence risk screening; approximately two-thirds received training in intervention techniques and case management strategies. Larger companies covered more of these topics than smaller companies.

**Table 3. Team composition.**

	Percentage of Respondents
Security	97.2
Legal / Compliance	93.0
Human Resources	91.5
External Consultant	35.2
Employee Assistance Program	25.4
Medical / Health Services	19.7
Ethics	12.7
Law Enforcement	12.7



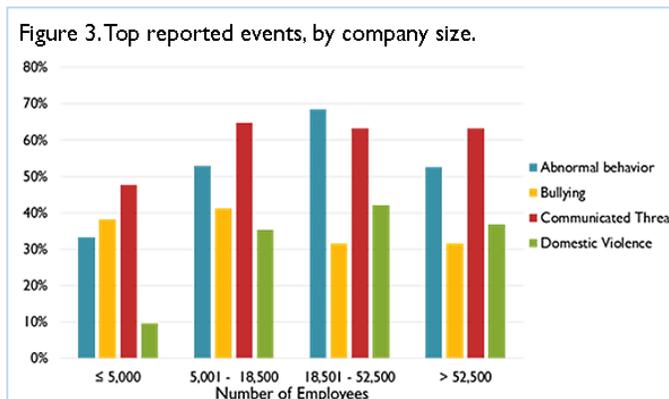
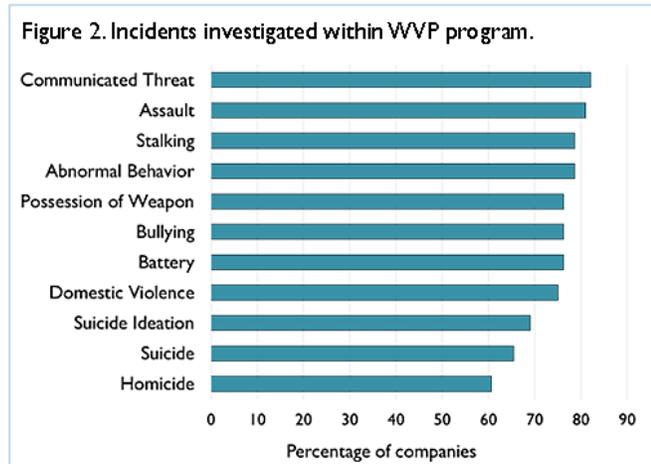
At least 70% of the respondents reported that their company's WVP teams were trained at least annually (Figure 1). Twenty-eight percent of the teams were also trained when a new member joined, and 20% were trained periodically or when new information was available.

Use of Threat Assessment Tools. Threat assessment tools were used by 70% of the WVP teams: 37% of the respondents reported that their teams used published and validated tools, 34% used tools created by their companies, and 7% reported using other tools (e.g. external experts).

## Workplace Violence Incidents and Reporting

Several types of workplace violence were investigated as part of the companies' WVP programs (Figure 2). Approximately 80% of the companies investigated:

- communicated threats (any expression of an intention to injure another person whether done verbally, in writing, by gesture or electronically)
- assaults (any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury upon another person, when coupled with an apparent present ability to do so, or a show of force that creates a reasonable expectation of bodily harm)
- stalking (the act or crime of willfully and repeatedly following or harassing another person in circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety, injury, or death especially because of express or implied threats)
- abnormal behavior (behaviors causing discomfort to others, deviations from typical patterns/actions, demonstrating emotions of concern)



The most frequent types of events investigated included communicated threats (reported by 55% of respondents), abnormal behavior (reported by 48% of respondents) and bullying (reported by 33% of respondents). Abnormal behavior was more often reported by respondents from smaller companies, while communicated threats and domestic violence were more often reported by respondents from larger companies (Figure 3).

Perpetrator Relationship to Victim. Respondents were asked whether their companies documented the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim in reports of threatening behavior, threats and acts of violence, using a typology developed by OSHA. The typology defines the relationships as:

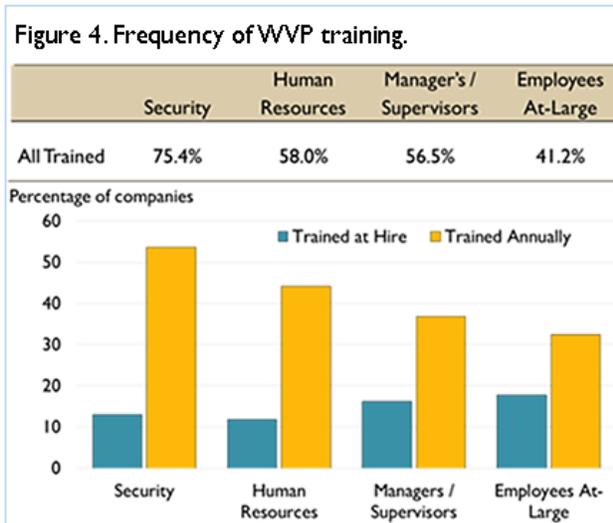
- Type I: perpetrator enters company with sole purpose of committing violent act, with no relationship to the victim (e.g., robber)
- Type II: perpetrator is legitimate user of company services (e.g., patient, customer, student)
- Type III: perpetrator is a current or former co-worker, supervisor or manager
- Type IV: perpetrator has a personal relationship with the victim with no other connection to the company

Fifty-nine percent of the respondents indicated their companies documented Type I events, 61% Type II events, 68% Type III events and 62% Type IV events.

Initial Reporting of Violence. Human Resources (97%), Security (94%), Management (85%) and a hotline (70%) were the most frequent responses to where employees initially report incidents of threatening behavior, threats and acts of violence.

## Workplace Violence Prevention Training and Resources

Training. Seventy-five percent of the respondents reported that all of their companies' security personnel received WVP training (Figure 4). Just over half reported that all human resources staff (58%) and managers and supervisors (57%) received WVP training. Less than half (41%) reported that employees at-large received training; however, this varied by the size of the company. Specifically, a larger proportion of respondents from smaller companies reported training all employees at-large, compared to respondents from larger companies. A very small percentage of respondents indicated that training was conducted at the time of hire for any of the worker groups. And, with the exception of security personnel, less than half of the respondents reported that human resources staff, managers and supervisors and employees at-large received WVP training at least annually.



Respondents were asked whether company personnel received training in content recommended in industry, including: understanding personal resources to address stressful or troubling circumstances, understanding reporting responsibilities and venues, handling threatening and aggressive or violent behavior, identifying problem behavior, and specific terms of the company's WVP policies. More companies trained Security and Human Resources staff in these content areas, compared to managers, supervisors and employees at-large (Figure 5).

Training Resources. Respondents reported that their companies provided several resources at the time of WVP training, including the WVP policy (92%), Employee Assistance Program (EAP) materials (89%), WVP presentations (79%) and contact numbers (56%). About one-third of the respondents indicated that their companies provided advanced threat/active shooter threat presentations (38%), personal safety planning tip sheets (35%), manager resource tip sheets (32%), employee brochures (31%) and WVP posters (30%).

Victim Resources. Most respondents (97%) indicated that victims of workplace violence were referred to EAP services, 58% reported that their companies provided critical incident de-briefing, and 49% reported

providing health services. The latter two are recommended by OSHA as resources that should be available to all victims of violence.

## Metrics

Nearly 90% of the respondents from larger companies reported maintaining metrics on workplace violence, compared to 63% of the respondents from smaller companies. Among companies maintaining metrics, most respondents indicated that their companies kept metrics on the type of threat (95%), region/geographic information (84%), individuals involved in the event (84%) and trends (70%) (Table 4). The purpose of maintaining metrics included to: inform leadership (reported by 90% of respondents), identify a specific category of threatening behavior, threat or act of violence (88%), identify emerging trends (88%), and target additional training opportunities (81%). Only 23% of the respondents reported that metrics were maintained to drive additional head count.

Table 4. Purpose of maintaining metrics.

Purpose	Percentage of Companies
Informs leadership	89.5
Identifies a specific category of threatening behavior	87.7
Identifies emerging trends	87.7
Targets additional training opportunities	80.7
Drives additional headcount	22.8

## CONCLUSION

Most companies surveyed had workplace violence prevention (WVP) programs and evaluate the effectiveness of their programs, although smaller companies were less likely to evaluate program effectiveness than larger companies. Respondents reported that their companies used several resources in the development and implementation of their programs. Approximately 70% of the respondents reported that their companies used the ASIS/SHRM Workplace Violence Standard to develop, update and maintain their programs, compared to 63% who used ATAP resources and materials. Company workplace violence prevention teams, in combination with external resources such as consulting psychologists or psychiatrists, were used by most companies to manage threatening behavior, threats and acts of violence. Threat assessment tools were used by 70% of the teams; however, only about one-third of the teams used tools that were published and validated. The WVP teams were primarily made up of members from Security, Legal/Compliance and Human Resources, but lacked representation from employee assistance programs (EAP) and medical/health services.

Most WVP teams received training at least annually and on topics recommended by industry standards. ATAP conferences and external subject matter experts were the primary sources for this training. Most companies also provided workplace violence prevention training to all Security personnel. However, a significant percentage of the companies surveyed did not offer WVP training to all Human Resources personnel, managers/supervisors and employees at-large. Less than half of the companies trained these employee groups at least annually, and less than 25% of the companies trained them at the time of hire. Human Resources staff and managers/supervisors are often times the first to observe employees exhibiting unusual behaviors or the first points of contact for employees for reporting concerns.

Companies investigated several types of workplace violence. However, the most frequent types of events investigated included communicated threats, abnormal behaviors and bullying. Abnormal behavior was most frequently investigated in smaller companies, while communicated threats and domestic violence were most commonly investigated in larger companies. Companies rely heavily on EAP services for victims of workplace violence and less so on providing critical incident de-briefing and health services.

Nearly all of the companies surveyed maintained metrics on workplace violence, and most did so for the same reasons, including informing leadership, identifying specific types of violence and emerging issues, and illustrating training needs. Most companies also maintained the same type of metrics, specifically the type of violence, location, individuals involved and trends.

## How this report can be used

This report was developed as a helpful tool for company workplace violence prevention teams. When using the data in this report, it is important to remember that the responses are from ATAP members and thus is not representative of all companies – in fact, the companies that provided these data are likely to have more advanced workplace violence prevention programs than companies that do not have ATAP memberships.

Nonetheless, the information in this report can be helpful for activities such as benchmarking your program and advocating for your program. For example, you could compare the components measured in this report to the ones you have in your company, and identify the similarities and differences between your company's program and the trends found in this report. Further discussion with your team could help identify if any of the missing components represent gaps in your program. One finding from the report showed that the makeup of companies' programs vary in components, tools, and resources. Benchmarking your company program against these trends can help focus a discussion of program strengths and gaps.

If a gap is identified, we hope this report might be helpful in advocating for resources to fill the gap. For example, if your company does not have training for Human Resource personnel, you could cite this report illustrating that more than 50% of ATAP member companies have such training in supporting a proposal to establish such training.

## NEXT STEPS

Results from the survey provide a start to understanding elements of workplace violence prevention and response practices currently in use at select companies throughout the US. Results, however, offer a somewhat limited view of these practices because survey respondents were restricted to ATAP members and those who attended the 2013 ATAP conference. As a result, information from a wider segment of the corporate community is needed to broaden our results and subsequent understanding of WVP and response practices.

To address this limitation, the ATAP working group's next step is to expand the outreach of the survey to include more mid-size businesses and non-ATAP members found in ASIS, SHRM and US Chambers, to name a few.

Once this is accomplished, we hope to gain a better understanding of how corporate workplace violence prevention programs operate, which may include, but not be limited to, the effectiveness of Workplace Violence Prevention Teams, policy elements, training offered, tools available, metrics and what is being measured.

While the current survey results provide a snapshot of elements of some workplace violence prevention and response practices currently in place, the elements reported do not in themselves define a set of "best practice" standards at this time.

Further expansion of the survey to include questions that provide insights into how these teams operate efficiently to the benefit of corporate American companies, and in turn, contribute to how these teams assess, respond to and mitigate threats, threatening behavior, and acts of workplace violence, will add greater value to the survey results; and is an area the working group will explore.

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